

7

# WAYS YOUR BRAIN CAN STOP YOU

## *from Recruiting the Right Candidate*

Whether or not you're aware of it, you make thousands of decisions every day—around 35,000, to be exact. In any given moment, our brains are bombarded with tons of information that must be quickly processed, informing our decisions, both big and small. So, to keep up and be efficient, our brains take mental shortcuts. **These decision-making hacks, which are often unconscious processes, are called cognitive biases.**

Though our cognitive biases enable us to promptly assess situations, they can also lead to poor, sloppy decisions. This is especially true for recruiters, who are under pressure to find the ideal person for a position with little time to evaluate each applicant.

To best determine the strongest fit, keep these 7 cognitive biases in mind the next time you're making a recruitment decision:

**1 Groupthink bias:** automatically going along with the majority view or the loudest voice in the room to avoid confrontation with or rejection from the group

**How can you minimize it?**

- » Pace decision-making with objective, critical questioning.
- » Decide on a standardized decision-making process before the meeting.

**2 Entomologist bias:** eliminating emotions and other factors in favor of making judgments strictly on facts or what's presented on paper

**How can you minimize it?**

- » Inspect a candidate more broadly than their CV.
- » Examine how life experiences and worldview have affected their performance.

**3 Halo effect:** allowing one trait (such as a physical attractiveness, dress, or likability) to influence your overall judgment of the person

**How can you minimize it?**

- » Notice and compare scoring trends of candidates to uncover unconscious bias.
- » Review CVs blindly to provide an additional layer of objectivity.

**4 Anchoring bias:** relying on an initial piece of information (such as evaluating candidates against the very first person interviewed), which serves as a marker for all who follow

**How can you minimize it?**

- » Be prepared with comprehensive data to override snap decisions.
- » Use a predetermined rubric for all interviews.

**5 Confirmation bias:** favoring people, things, and ideas that confirm your beliefs

**How can you minimize it?**

- » Establish the practice of looking for holes in your own easily reached conclusions.
- » Heighten awareness of preformed decisions about candidates before they interview, such as where they went to school or even their names.

**6 Projection bias:** assuming fellow interviewers have the same priorities or attitudes as you

**How can you minimize it?**

- » Engage the team with questions about candidates before stating your opinions to encourage discussion.
- » Prepare to back up your views with your rationale and be open to other views.
- » Check that the candidate meets the organization's goals—not just your own.

**7 In-group bias:** preferring those who are most like you or belong to the same groups

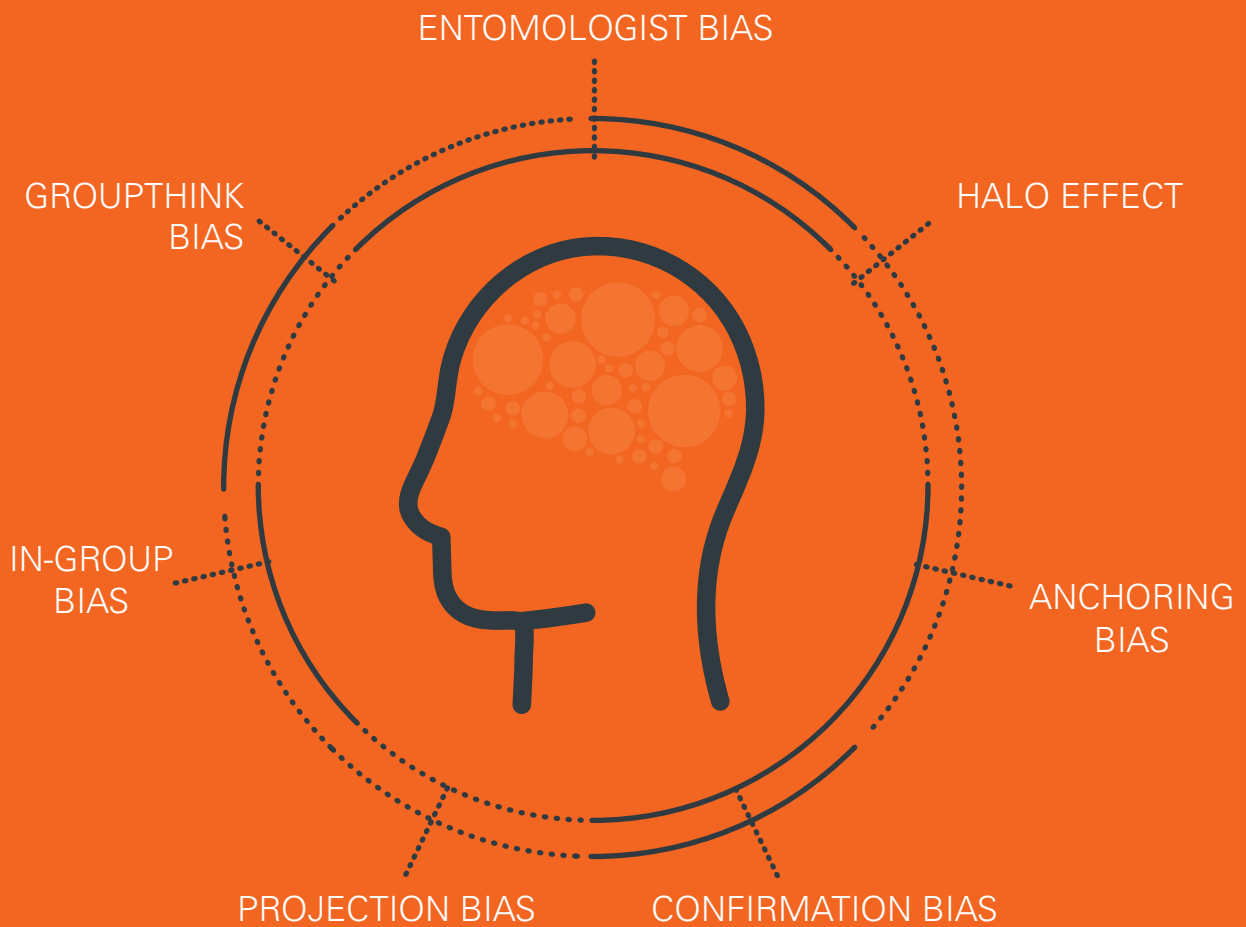
**How can you minimize it?**

- » Social cohesion can be valuable, but pursuit of diversity can yield better results.
- » Think carefully about elements that resonate with you, or irritate you, and why.

**Additional Resources**

Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2016). *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people*. New York: Bantam.  
 Ross, H. J. (2016). *Everyday bias: Identifying and navigating unconscious judgments in our daily lives*. Rowman & Littlefield.  
 Ross, H. J. (2018, April 10). Talk at Google: Everyday Bias. APB Speakers. Retrieved from <https://youtube.com/KVp9xCmDqPs>

# Keep these 7 cognitive biases in mind the next time you're making a recruitment decision



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